

**COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA**  
**Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**  
**September 12, 2002**

Attendees:

Art Donoho	Doug Hall	Jim Cooper	Jane Ross
John Foster	Joe Keys	Shana Gillette	Suzy Stutzman
Doralyn Genova	Bob Silbernagel	Mel Lloyd	Tom Wiley
Greg Gnesios	Russ Walker	Phadrea Ponds	Palma Wilson
Warren Gore	Gene Arnesen	Catherine Robertson	George Rossman

**Greetings and Introduction**

Warren Gore called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Warren requested a roundtable of introductions.

**U.S. Geological Survey Update**

Phadrea Ponds and Shana Gillette, from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), explained the upcoming survey that will be conducted for the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA). The survey's main objective is to explore how CCNCA users would feel about paying fees as a way to maintain and/or enhance their recreational experience within the CCNCA. The initial draft survey is nearing completion and USGS is now asking the Advisory Council to assist them with determining survey specifics, including which trailheads and zones to focus on, as well as specific management actions that the Advisory Council might feel are pertinent to CCNCA users.

The second stage in the survey process will require that USGS send the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) a 60-day notice stating its intent to survey the public. This process is anticipated to begin next week. Shana added that the survey would be conducted at locations where site improvements are proposed and that a representative sampling method, which is being designed now, would be used.

The Advisory Council was asked to think about particular situations they would envision for charging fees, as well as specific times of the year for which those fees would apply. Other issues that the survey can focus on are equitable policies regarding low-income users versus higher income users; user expectations, i.e., providing facilities and/or preserving resources; and the impact on other resource areas accepting any displaced users.

Shana and Phadrea also wondered if the Advisory Council would find any value in exploring user expenditure profiles (travel costs) beyond the off-highway vehicle (OHV)

data that was previously gathered. USGS wants to focus on questions that will assist the Advisory Council in developing the management plan.

Discussions returned to charging fees, and overcrowding was mentioned as a factor in initiating a fee program. Jane Ross, CCNCA Planning and Environmental Coordinator, stressed that it will be critical to assure users who complete the survey that charging a user fee is only being explored and not anticipated at this time. Warren pointed out that designated campsites should also be considered as a factor. Phadrea mentioned focusing the survey on the four major zones of the CCNCA, rather than all eight zones within the NCA. Timing for the survey is anticipated to occur in spring, summer, and perhaps fall 2003. A general survey will be sent to the community-at-large, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) National Conservation Area (NCA) mailing list will be used. Gene asked about the value of a summer survey, and the Advisory Council agreed that the River Corridor would be the only zone worth surveying during the hot summer months. In addition to the direct mail survey, onsite surveys will be conducted with users offered the option of returning the survey by postage-paid mail. As a follow-up tool, user names and contact information will be gathered in the field as well.

Warren returned to the discussion of user travel-cost profiles and expressed his interest in having this data available to the Advisory Council. Catherine Robertson, Grand Junction Field Manager, appreciated Warren's interest in knowing this information, as well as realizing the value in forming Friends' groups. The BLM is investing, and ultimately contributing, a great deal to the community's economy as a result of tourism dollars spent in the valley—the National Park Service (Colorado National Monument) is not the only government agency providing quality recreational opportunities to visitors. Extensive discussions ensued on knowing the value of this type of information. Jane added that the Colorado National Monument staff is currently working on its general management plan (GMP), and compared to the BLM's increased usage projections, the Monument's usage trends are remaining stable. Catherine asked whether the Advisory Council might have an interest in adding a survey question about other activities users have planned while in the valley.

Another valuable tool will be learning exactly how much people would be willing to pay for their CCNCA recreational experience. The Advisory Council was assured that USGS will design the survey in a way that users will be presented with several answer choices, such as by annual pass, a one-time fee, local passes, group/individual fees, etc.

### **Working Group Updates**

#### **River Corridor Working Group:**

Russ Walker provided this update; because no meetings were held during the summer, there was nothing to report. Jane requested that the group have at least two meetings in the near future.

#### **Rabbit Valley Working Group:**

Bob Silbernagel updated the group on the meeting held last Monday. The trail alternatives map was distributed to the Advisory Council, and Bob explained the various

trail systems reflected. The Working Group is working to reach consensus on the green trails adjacent to and south of I-70. The "Proposal B" trails on Wild Horse Mesa may be left on the map as part of a "high-recreation alternative." The proposed trails near the smaller paleontological area could offer a great opportunity for OHV users without a big impact to resources, but is not yet being recommended. The river access near the Mack Ridge Overlook will be left as an alternative, but the road stopped short of the river with hiking access only down to the river. The Working Group agreed upon all noted closures on the map, and the road near the two ponds and paleontological area north of I-70 should be extended to meet with a trail in Utah. The proposed target shooting area will be left in but not marked, and south of I-70 will be designated as no shooting altogether (as well as "The Trail through Time" north of I-70). The other proposed trail providing access to the river will not be considered given both cultural resource and private land issues.

Responding to a question, Jim Cooper, BLM Transportation Planner, explained that the play area is designated for educational kiosks, toilets, trail warm-up, etc. Both Warren and Bob mentioned that in past conversations with others, people desire access to the river. If a legal route does not exist, people will create their own. Land health and grazing issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Rabbit Valley Working Group. Jane added an update on Utah's progress on its Utah Rims travel management plan, which will be released for comment soon. Bob requested that, when the CCNCA plan is final, a breakdown in the total number of trail miles closed, created, etc., be made available to the Advisory Council. Jane announced that the next Working Group meeting is scheduled for September 23, at Fruita's Civic Center, and not only land health/grazing, but also target shooting issues, will probably be discussed.

#### **Mack Ridge Working Group:**

John Foster and Dan Rosenthal have been on vacation and no other group members were available to offer an update. The group's next meeting is scheduled for Monday night.

#### **Wilderness Working Group:**

Joe Keys provided a brief update. Rattlesnake Arches and the cherry-stem road discussions have been finalized with little change noted. The group would like to see additional parking spaces designated for overnight backcountry users but not campers. Locating a campground staging area, at either the Mee Canyon Trailhead or the "T" intersection on the lower road, was discussed. The group decided that the sage flat area on the lower road was the best campground staging area, but no one seemed to have a strong opinion. Everyone feels there is a need for both parking and camping, but the group is deferring the final decision to BLM. Jane pointed out that some of these decisions might be tied to the pending boundary adjustment for the Wilderness area of the CCNCA. No formal group size limitations were recommended, but the group feels that less than 25 individuals is an appropriate size. Art Donoho expressed an interest in having Wilderness roads rehabilitated if they do not provide access to grazing areas and/or ponds. It was stressed that people do not want to enter Wilderness areas by accessing a road. Jane complimented the Wilderness group on its organized and efficient meetings.

## **Colorado National Monument Update**

Palma Wilson, Colorado National Monument Superintendent, and Suzy Stutzman, Team Captain for the General Management Plan (GMP), presented an update on the Monument's GMP process, initiated about a year ago. The public scoping phase is complete, allowing the group to refocus on the issues of rapid urbanization and how the Monument expects to meet this development. The staff feels it does not have a wide range of options; so two directions are the plan's focus—accommodating those urban pressures and better use of existing resources. The thrust is toward inventorying current resources and more closely guarding those resources. Karen Wade, Director of the National Park Service's Intermountain Region, recently stressed to Palma that proposed Monument alternatives mesh well with the NCA alternatives. Collaboration will continue to be key.

The Monument developed its alternatives this week, and will have them refined by December. The Monument's fencing policy will be coordinated with the BLM to ensure grazing permittees are not impacted. The Monument is also exploring acquiring two pieces of BLM land that are adjacent to the Monument (but not in the NCA), but more research is necessary to determine viability. They are also looking at making the historic Fruita Dugway Trail a more formal trail. Catherine suggested that Palma bring Chris Pipkin from the BLM Grand Junction field office into their discussions about BLM areas adjacent to the Monument, but not part of the CCNCA. Other areas with great potential for collaboration between the CCNCA and the Monument include Indian tribe consultations, weed management, over-flight patterns, fire management, volunteer programs, urban development, and an interagency visitors' center.

Warren asked whose responsibility it is to repair fences in the Monument, and Palma indicated that as resources allow, the Monument is responsible. Art asked about users crossing borders between the Monument and the NCA, and possible violations related to that. Dogs are limited to specific areas, and horses are limited mostly by the terrain. Warren asked about the increase in elk population on the west boundary, and Palma commented that nothing out of the ordinary had been noted.

## **BLM Update**

Greg Gnesios, CCNCA Manager, announced that BLM is holding one of its more visible events, Public Lands Day, on September 28, and this year the event focuses on Dinosaur Hill. Volunteers are extending the trail to the quarry site this year. Wade Johnson, BLM Interpretive Specialist, is up for an award for his work on the impaired users' trail built last year and is presenting a project paper on the Dinosaur Hill development. Greg also mentioned that the BLM grant writing and visioning workshops have been rescheduled for October 24-25. Gene Arnesen, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner, added that October 24 would be the all-day session on grant writing, while the October 25 session is dedicated to the NCA staff for visioning and partnerships. Greg encouraged the Advisory Council to attend either or both sessions, but especially the October 25 session. This session is currently scheduled for a morning time, but if the interest exists, an evening time may be arranged. These sessions are important for anyone with a stake in the NCA; both now and in the future.

Greg also mentioned the Washington Office approval of our request for a deadline extension in completing the RMP. A copy of this request was distributed to the Advisory Council for review. The BLM asked for a 12-month extension, and a compromise was reached. The draft is now due October 2003, and the approved RMP and Final Record of Decision are due June 2004. The proposed schedule for the CCNCA RMP/EIS was also included in this handout. Jane explained that we are in the process of developing alternative themes, which will in turn lead to the actual alternatives. The different themes being considered are recreation-intensive, conservation-intensive, multiple-use intensive, and adaptive management.

Doralyn asked whether the USGS survey would be available for developing alternatives, and it will not. However, the Northern Arizona University (NAU) survey data will be available, and Catherine mentioned that NAU data would be the most useful at this point in the process. Alternatives should be viable, but they must be consistent with the NCA legislation. The RMP's focus must maintain historical use, but also preserve and protect for future generations. Jane said that Working Groups are at a point where they need some closure and suggested that some facilitated meetings would be helpful for talking over group goals and objectives, and developing recommendations to bring back to the Advisory Council. A BLM employee from Glenwood Springs will, hopefully, facilitate the meetings scheduled for late October to assist with these items.

Greg asked the Advisory Council about setting a different schedule for 2003 meetings. Warren suggested the first Thursday of every month, effective January 2, 2002, and all agreed.

Greg reminded the group about upcoming field trips. The River Corridor field trip is September 21, and people attending are to meet at the BLM office at 7:30 a.m. The party will depart from the Loma boat launch shortly after 8 a.m., and it is "bring your own lunch." The Rabbit Valley field trip is on September 28, and participants can meet at 8:00 a.m. at the BLM office or at the Rabbit Valley parking lot/rest area at 8:30 a.m. Jane urged the Advisory Council to make this one since Rabbit Valley is a high-use area, and planning recommendations for this area will be complex.

### **New Business**

Bob asked about the finance update and Greg said there was no news to report.

### **Public Comment**

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.